

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) An endoscope comprising:
 - an insertion unit having a soft portion, the insertion unit having an articulating section at a distal endoscope end thereof;
 - a control section disposed at a proximal end of the insertion unit for controlling articulation of the articulating section;
 - a small-diameter portion which is included in the soft portion and whose outer diameter is substantially the same over the whole length thereof;
 - a large-diameter portion which is formed on the operator side of the soft portion opposite to the small-diameter portion and whose outer diameter is larger than the outer diameter of the small-diameter portion;
 - a tapered portion linking the small-diameter portion and the large-diameter portion, wherein at least part of the tapered portion is disposed ~~forward an endoscope portion separated~~ 70 cm or less from the distal endoscope end; and
 - a sheathing resin that is an integral member having a thickness which is varied in order to form the small-diameter portion, the large-diameter portion, and the tapered portion.
2. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein the small-diameter portion is long enough to be bent 180° while forming an arc having a minimum radius.
3. (Currently Amended) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein at least part of the tapered portion is located ~~forward an endoscope portion separated~~ 45 cm or less from the distal end.

4. (Currently Amended) An endoscope according to Claim 2, wherein at least part of the tapered portion is located ~~forward an endoscope portion separated~~ 45 cm or less from the distal end.

5. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal end are inscribed on the soft portion.

6. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 2, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal end are inscribed on the soft portion.

7. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 3, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal end are inscribed on the soft portion.

8. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 4, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal end are inscribed on the soft portion.

9. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 5, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

10. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 6, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

11. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 7, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

12. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 8, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

13. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 9, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

14. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 10, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

15. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 11, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

16. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 12, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

17. (Previously Presented) An insertion unit for an endoscope, the insertion unit comprising:

an articulating section at a distal end thereof, the articulating section being controlled by a control section disposed at a proximal end of the insertion unit;

a soft portion including a small-diameter portion and a large-diameter portion;

the large diameter portion which is formed on the operator side of the soft portion opposite to the small diameter portion and whose outer diameter is larger than the outer diameter of the small diameter portion;

a tapered portion included in the soft portion linking the small-diameter portion and the large-diameter portion, wherein at least part of the tapered portion is separated 70 cm or less from a distal end; and

a sheathing resin that is an integral member having a thickness which is varied in order to form the small-diameter portion, the large-diameter portion and the tapered portion.

18. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein:

the thickness of the sheathing resin is varied in order to form the small-diameter portion, the large-diameter portion, and the tapered portion; and

the sheathing resin has an inner diameter formed to be constant over the small-diameter portion, the large-diameter portion, and the tapered portion.

19. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein the small-diameter portion and the large-diameter portion each have a substantially constant outer diameter over their respective length.

20. (New) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein at least an outer surface of the sheathing resin is configured by a single integral member.